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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Psychology and Pedagogy of Writing.* BY MARY E. THOMPSON. Baltimore: Warwick & York, 1911. Pp. 128.

The aim of this book is to do for writing what Huey did for reading, that is, to make an analysis of the psychological processes which are involved in writing and to discuss critically the pedagogy of the subject in the light of this psychological analysis. The present effort, however, has not met with the success which attended the work of Huey. That this is true will appear from a survey of the book.

The book is divided in the main into three parts. The first includes an introduction and a brief description of the historical development of the alphabet; the second consists of a description of experiments which have relation to writing; and the third treats of the bearing of these experiments upon the teaching of writing. The description of the historical development of the alphabet, although much shorter than Huey's discussion of the same subject, occupies with the preface and introduction over one-fourth of the book. The subject is not very closely related to the development of writing in the child and the brevity of the discussion precludes a treatment which will have value in itself as compared with other treatments of the same subject.

This lack of relevancy appears also in the discussion of the experiments. This consists merely in a brief review of some of the investigations which have more or less bearing upon writing and in incidental remarks upon their application. The reviews themselves are not full nor clear. Some parts are even enigmatical—as for example the sentence which concludes the review of Meumann: "While increased speed causes fixed rhythmical pressure on parts of words and single letters, the child uses always a longer time [with increased speed?], and every stroke is made with approximately equal speed; absolute pressure therefore [?] is less important" (p. 79).

Some topics are given much less than their due space in this experimental section—the complexity of the writing movement for example is treated in two-thirds of a page—and many important investigations and discussions are not mentioned. Among the authors omitted are Abt, Awramoff, Binet and Courtier (except in the reference by McAllister), Diehl, Freeman, Gross, Goldscheider, Jack, Obici, Javal, M. K. Smith, and Starch.

The discussion of the pedagogy of writing consists of little more than a brief repetition of some of the experimental results mentioned in the preceding section, with a few practical applications. This discussion is not of a sort which will be of much value to the teacher. The rules laid down are sometimes vague and sometimes dogmatic and not organized so as to give any coherent view of teaching policy. The author even goes out of her way to assert that formal drill in spelling will not carry over to composition. Many quotations might be given to substantiate these criticisms but one or two will suffice. In discussing speed the author says: "Natural slant (elsewhere given as 80°) is the slope which allows the most rapid writing" (p. 100); but in discussing slant: "The greater the slant to the right the more rapid will be the writing" (p. 97). In another place the teacher is warned that "by having the child form one letter at a time the innervation of the mind is retarded" (p. 90); and is urged that the pupils be "trained toward a totality of will impulse" (p. 99). The writer is convinced that such ill-digested application of psychological experiments to pedagogy will retard rather than advance the cause of educational psychology not only in the eyes of practical educators but also in the eyes of scientific workers in this and other fields.

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